

March 11, 2015

**Testimony to CT General Assembly Judiciary Committee in support of:**

*SB 650 An Act Concerning Temporary Restraining Orders*

*HB 6848 An Act Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence*

*HB 6962 An Act Concerning Firearm Safety*

Mr Chairmen and members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Wendy Skratt and I live in the 146th District in Stamford with my husband and two young kids. I am an advocate for gun safety and I work with several organizations throughout CT to this affect.

Regarding the two domestic violence bills, SB 650 and HB 6848, I'd like to share with you an experience of mine. About a year ago, a high school friend of mine filed for divorce from her husband. She was sharing some basic details of the events on Facebook so that her friends could provide moral support, me among them. Her husband was dragging out the legal proceedings and when he had exhausted all his legal delays, he started coming to her house (from which he had previously moved out) always to look for one item or another that he said he'd left behind. It evolved into harassment and she filed for a temporary restraining order. I will always remember the day she posted about her inability to have his personal firearms removed from him during the wait time to go before a judge. She worked from home, so she didn't even have the opportunity to go to a workplace during the day to have the safety of others around her. She posted regularly throughout the days, every day, to let us all know that she was ok. We all counted down the days together before she got before a judge. Her kids were college age and they were the ones who kept guard... against their father, during this period. This family and those who care about them were lucky. They managed to rally enough resources to head off any potential trouble. But everyone involved knew the potential was there. We know the statistics.

Others are not so lucky. In CT, Lori Jackson was killed last year by her abusive husband while supposedly under protection of a temporary restraining order. This is not protection. We need to do better. We cannot rely on luck. As a society, we need to create better solutions. SB 650 and HB 6848 are better solutions. Gun owners talk a lot about their safety, and their need to protect it. But rarely about the risk that guns introduce into particular environments. The filing of a temporary restraining order is one such environment. No one should have to put their life in additional danger to get away from abusive situations. But that's the way it currently stands. I urge you to support these legislative solutions.

Secondly, regarding HB 6962, I support expanding safe storage of firearms. How many times have we heard friends or neighbors say “he seemed like such a regular person” or “there were no indications anything was wrong”? If only we could foretell who will misuse firearms that are available to them. It is clear we cannot. So, safe storage is necessary. Here is #2 on the 10 Rules of Safe Gun Handling from the NSSF website:

**“Firearms Should Be Unloaded When Not Actually In Use**

Firearms should be loaded only when you are in the field or on the target range or shooting area, ready to shoot. When not in use, firearms and ammunition should be secured in a safe place, separate from each other. It is your responsibility to prevent children and unauthorized adults from gaining access to firearms or ammunition. Unload your gun as soon as you are finished. A loaded gun has no place in or near a car, truck or building. Unload your gun immediately when you have finished shooting, well before you bring it into a car, camp or home.”

The only expansion this creates from what the NSSF recommends is that we don’t assume that we know who will be dangerous with a firearm. Since we passed universal background checks in CT, it seems to me that we’ve already established this precedent.

Respectfully,

Wendy Skratt  
Stamford, CT